

indian management

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ALL INDIA MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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A LEADERSHIP TOOL
Muniinder K Anand

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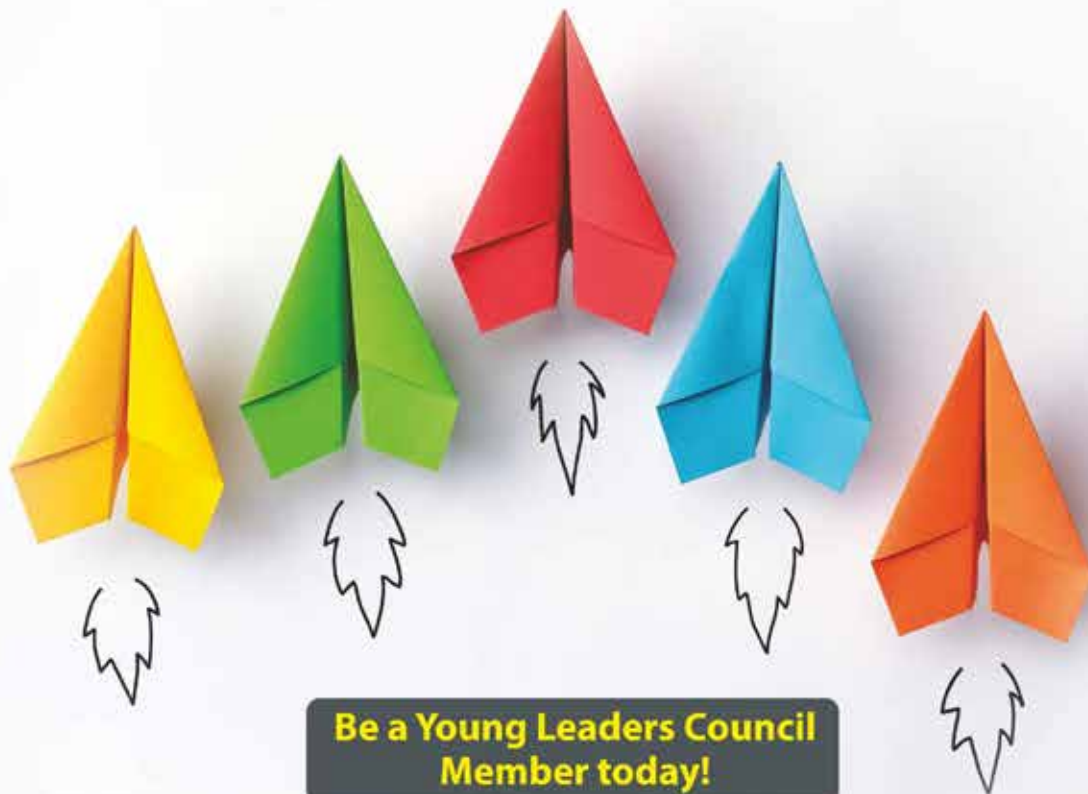
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India's century: Managing growth with transformation

Nikhil Sawhney is President, AIMA & Vice Chairman and Managing Director of Triveni Turbine Limited, and a Director of Triveni Engineering.

I am pleased to take on the responsibility of leading All India Management Association (AIMA) for the next 12 months and I am hopeful that this period will be one of stability, growth and transformation for both Indian economy and Indian management.

India finds itself in a sweet spot as the world is changing in multiple ways. The technological revolution, the shifts in supply

chains, the geopolitical flux—all favour India. India has many aces up its sleeve in the global competition for capital, know-how, and deals in the form of its population, which is the largest in the world, its GDP growth, which is highest among the large economies, and its location, which is strategic in determining the new power order in the world. India is already the fifth-largest economy and it is set to become the third-largest within a few years. India's digital economy is set to be worth \$1 trillion in three years, when India's total GDP is expected to cross the psychologically

important \$5 trillion mark.

This is India's century and everything points towards a great future for India. It is a time to raise Indian enterprises' expectations

and performance. It is a time to make Indian products, processes, and people the best in the world. India is seen as the key provider of both demand and supply to the world economy and India is seen as the deciding factor in the struggles involving global economic and security governance.

One key area where India's role is critical in saving the world from a catastrophic disaster is climate change. India's strong intent and progress in adopting and promoting green technologies will not only lower global temperature, it will also drive the next phase of growth in Indian economy. India's renewable energy, automotive, metal, and commercial farming sectors will be at the centre of India's new economic growth, aided by new digital technologies.

India's response to climate change is extremely positive. India has signed the Paris Climate Agreement to reduce its economy's carbon intensity by 45 per cent by 2030, and eventually achieve net zero emission by 2070. India is targeting 500 gigawatts of renewable energy production by 2030 and subsequently increase it to 1,000 gigawatts. India's push for grid batteries for storing renewable energy is key to a big reduction in Indian's economy's carbon intensity. India's promotion of ethanol, hydrogen and electric vehicles is another big piece of India's transformation.

India's response to climate change is extremely positive. India has signed the Paris Climate Agreement to reduce its economy's carbon intensity by 45% by 2030, and eventually achieve net zero emission by 2070.

AIMA has always introduced new knowledge and perspectives to India's management leadership. The organisation is staying ahead of the curve by offering new age management courses and exposing senior leadership to the latest technologies and innovations in the world.

Raising the standards of Indian population's education and skills are vital to realize India's manifest destiny. India needs to flatten the

pyramid of wealth creation and accumulation by giving more people the opportunity to participate in and benefit from India's economic growth. The best means of redistribution is democratising the ability to work with new technologies, work in the high-value sectors, and undertake innovation and entrepreneurship. India needs to upskill the existing workforce and refresh the curriculum in schools and universities. Ultimately, technology by itself can do little and it is the augmented people who can raise the production and consumption in an economy. India needs to commit more resources and leadership bandwidth to education and skills to prevent India's economic growth from sliding back.

AIMA has always introduced new knowledge and perspectives to India's management leadership. The organisation is staying ahead of the curve by offering new age management courses and exposing senior leadership to the latest technologies and innovations in the world. AIMA is providing platforms for dialogue among world's leaders from governments, business, science &

technology, and academia. AIMA is and will remain a critical resource for management learning and upgrade through these times of unprecedented change.

I invite all of you to participate in India's progress to higher standards and achievements. **IM**

The opinion expressed is personal.

About AIMA President

Mr. Nikhil Sawhney is the Vice Chairman and Managing Director of Triveni Turbine Limited and a Director with Triveni Engineering and Industries Limited. He has worked in the fields of investment banking and consumer goods in the UK and the USA before joining Triveni Engineering in 1999.

Mr. Sawhney was ranked as one of India's forty 'hottest' business leaders under 40 by The Economic Times in 2015. Mr Sawhney has a Bachelor's degree in Arts and a Master's degree in Arts from Emmanuel College, University of Cambridge, and a Master's degree in Business Administration from The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

We've heard of workplace stories of the past—probably from our parents and other elders—about bosses who were quite detached from the needs and aspirations of their employees; who would impose their target expectations on their teams without caring if the team possessed the capability and the tools required to achieve those targets; and who were intelligent and driven, but lacked the basic leadership quality of empathy.

Today, the situation is in stark contrast to that of the days gone by. Organisations have realised that maintaining a 'healthy' workforce can reap manifold benefits for them—from drop in attrition rate to increased productivity and profits, and everything in between. Here, 'healthy' is more about mental health than physical. It is about the emotional needs of employees.

The ideal manager of today listens to his team members, tries to understand their problems, empathises with them, does not yell at their failure, and motivates them to perform at their optimum. In short, he/she displays a high level of emotional intelligence, i.e., understands the emotions of their people.

Muniinder K Anand from Center for Creative Leadership, writes in the cover story of this issue, "Employees wish to be led by an individual who is unafraid of being vulnerable while knowing how to regulate their emotions. Taking a clear stand on tough issues, their actions match their words. This creates an image of a human leader who is approachable and whom people at all levels can trust."

Emotional intelligence is a key feature of a strong leader—such a leader influences his team in a positive manner and can guide it towards success.

Do write in with your views to imeditorial@spentamultimedia.com

Maneck Davar
Maneck Davar

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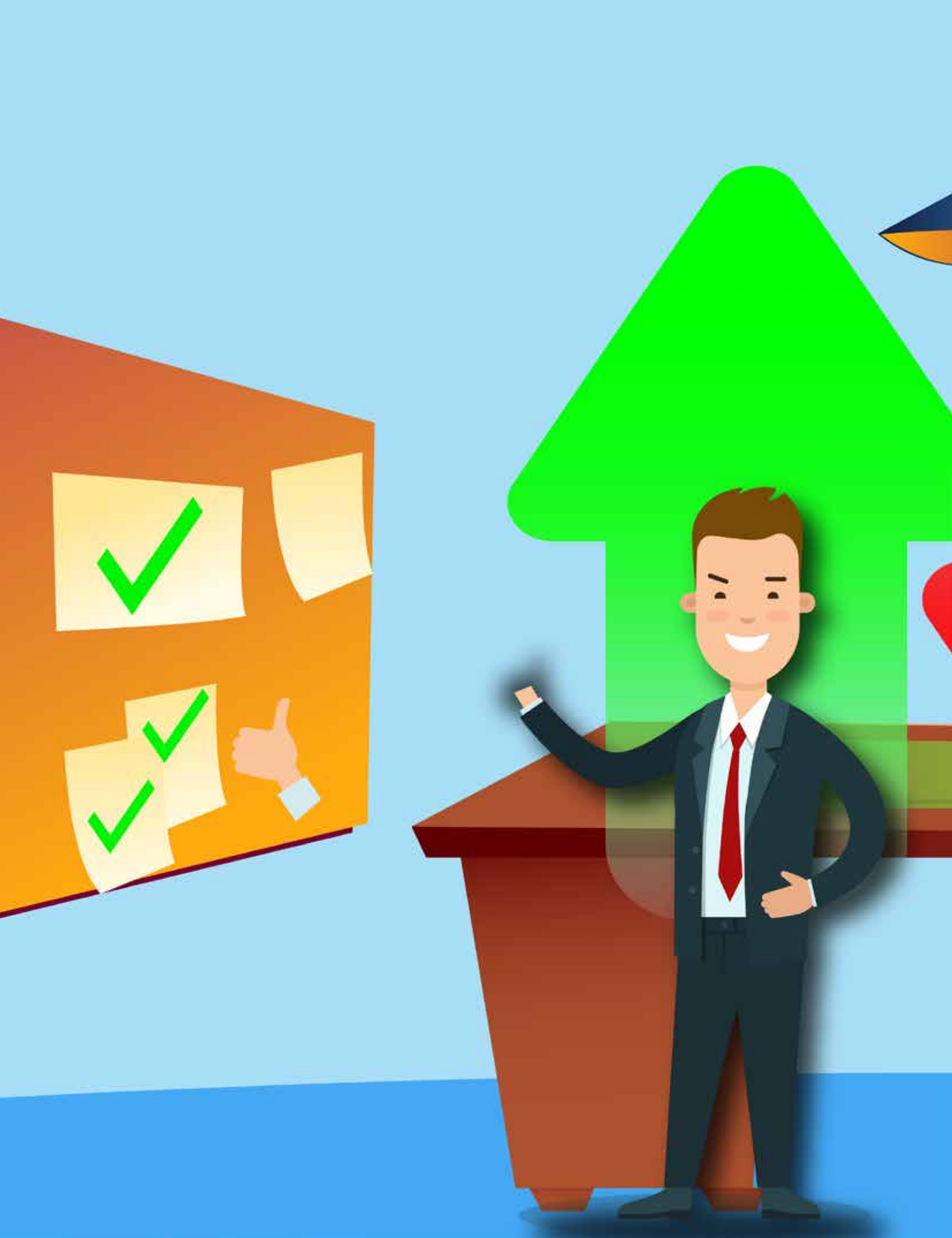


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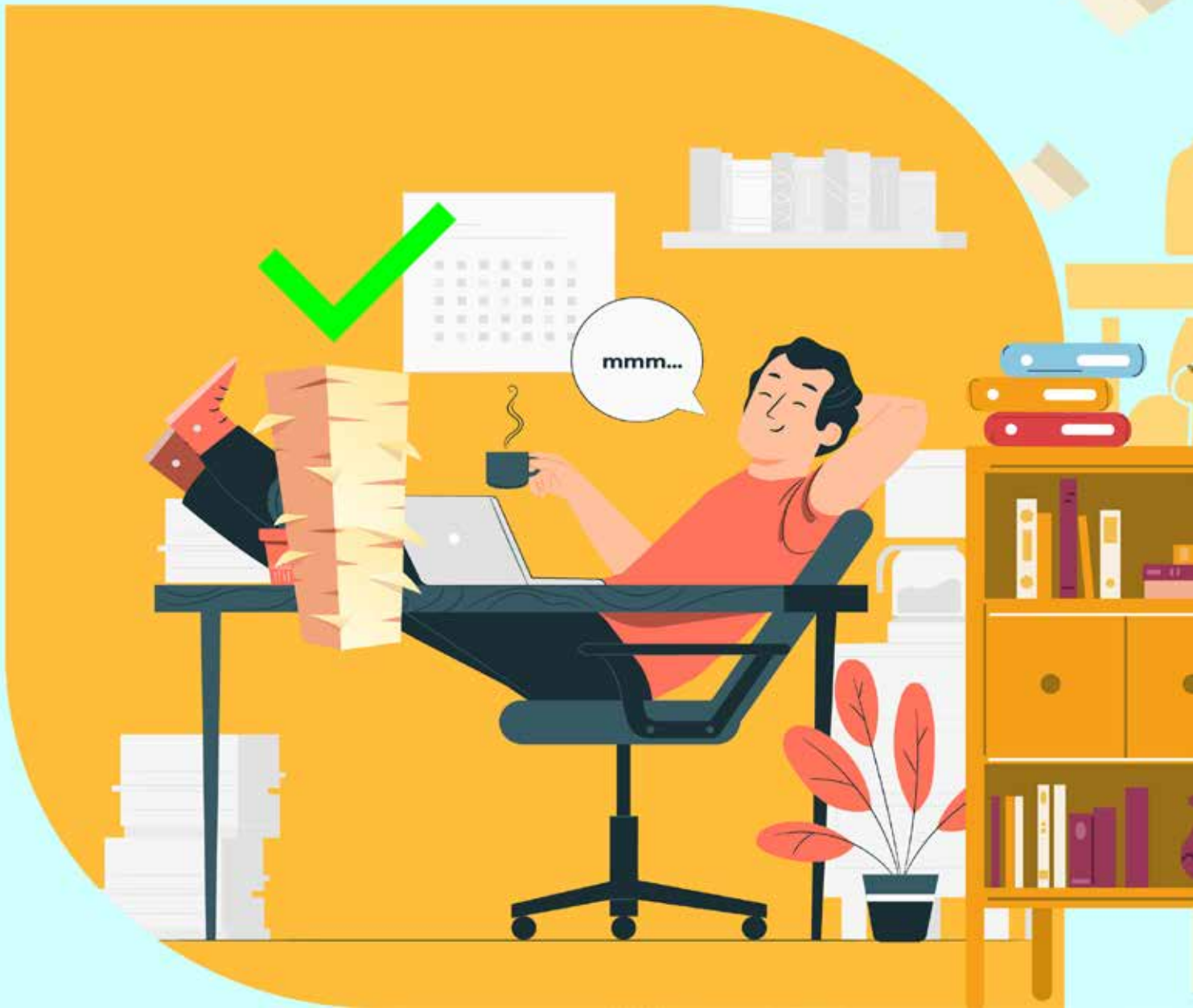
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LEADING WITH EMPATHY





A leadership tool

Emotional intelligence can make the workplace more inclusive and equal.

◆ MUNIINDER K ANAND, *CENTER FOR CREATIVE LEADERSHIP*



The mainstream belief that people with a dominant right brain are rational, while creativity is higher in left-brained people, is actually a myth. Ample studies and research indicate no clear difference between their functions. Both sides show a similar amount of activity. The lateral connection to emotions theory is mostly popular because of its widespread acceptance and not because of any substantial proof.

It directly relates to the notion that a distinct demarcation should and can be established between professional and personal lives. However, in today's digital age, when renowned brands face competition from constantly pivoting startups and tackle uncertainties in many shapes and form, leaders cannot just rely on rational thinking. How do leaders plan to meet the demands of the younger workforce, which prioritises purpose over pay? What about employee engagement and retention?

“Empathy makes you a better innovator.”

- Satya Nadella, CEO, Microsoft

Ever renewing uncertainties loom big and bring to the surface more complex problems, making innovation a necessity. The journey of inventing a concept, prototype, product, or service begins with an idea. Ideas strike us when we least expect them. Creative freedom is definitely a catalyst, but it is not sufficient. The major contributor to innovation is actually empathy. According to Catalyst, 61 per cent¹ of employees with leaders high in empathy reported being most often or always innovative at work.

In fact, empathetic leadership also impacts employee engagement. Even without the data and organisational jargon, it is palpable that high levels of stress can hamper the productivity of employees. Interpersonal relationships also suffer visibly. From performance to collaboration, every aspect is affected.

Fellow leaders can imagine a workplace that is crumbling not only due to the onset of a sudden crisis but also because of a lack of empathy in the workplace culture.

Is this a passing trend or a torch-bearer of change?

The stereotypical description of a leader neither fits

When dealing with people, let us remember we are not dealing with creatures of logic. We are dealing with creatures of emotion, creatures bristling with prejudices and motivated by pride and vanity.”

- Dale Carnegie, American writer and lecturer.

An organisation's people are its strength. So, if they have been struggling with something or can foresee an error turning into a complication in the future, it is necessary to pay heed.

the current requirements of the corporate world nor aligns with the demands of today's diverse workforce. Employees wish to be led by an individual who is unafraid of being vulnerable while knowing how to regulate their emotions. Taking a clear stand on tough issues, their actions match their words. This creates an image of a human leader who is approachable and whom people at all levels can trust.

Employees look up to such a leader in the hopes of following in their footsteps of success. Yet, it starts contradicting the idea of being your true self at work. How can we bring our authentic selves to work while leaving the emotional segments at home? How can you direct ideas to stay confined within a space and time limit?

This perfection creates a disconnect in the workplace community where people feel hesitant to share their honest opinions. Often, this becomes a reason for the most creative ideas to not reach their final execution and for a disengaged employee to quietly quit.

Identifying burnout, encouraging initiative, recognising efforts, and building connections—

all need emotional awareness in themselves and others. Leaders who want to invest in the growth of employees try to actively know the employees beyond their professional identities. Along with the implementation of policies, they bring about change through consistent inclusive practices.

However, to utilise the full potential of emotional intelligence, Center for Creative Leadership suggests² making some solutions a part of culture.

■ **Listen to learn.** Keeping an open mind and a non-judgmental stance can help a community become more compassionate. Especially, when the leader listens to the issues raised by the under-represented groups, whether in person or offline, anonymously or with identity, regarding work-related difficulties or personal life crises, they demonstrate the willingness to care during tough times.

This also holds true for unfiltered feedback. An organisation's people are its strength. So, if they have been struggling with something or can foresee an error turning into a complication in the future, it is necessary to pay heed. Create and maintain communication channels that allow



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people to articulate their honest emotions.

- **Understand to motivate.** Increasing raises, rewarding bonuses, and promoting consistently high performers certainly help employees. However, what they need are learning and development opportunities that help them upgrade their skills, both technical and core. Emotional intelligence is a powerful skill that can help individuals and teams become self-aware and improve their relationships.

Along with that, leaders need to acknowledge when an employee takes initiative and validate their efforts to improve. This gives a much-needed push to the employees who get motivated to continue innovating and contribute to the bigger objective.

- **Lead by example.** Actions will speak louder than words, and empathetic leaders always try

to align their words with actions. However, when they fail, they accept their mistakes and make amends. Considering this an opportunity to unlearn and relearn, they acquaint themselves with the right answers. They reach out to the experts to learn from those who have lived through the experiences.

This creates a culture where rules are the same for everyone—irrespective of hierarchical level, personal background, age, gender, skills, or sexual orientation people are treated in the same manner. So, everyone gets the chance to be more aware and more inclusive.

Emotional intelligence is the leadership tool that can ignite creativity, strengthen relationships, and make the workplace inclusive and equal. **IM**

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Muniinder K Anand is Managing Director — India, South Asia and Global Support, Center for Creative Leadership.



Together we march ahead

To my mind, two biggest problems faced by the world today are climate change (cause célèbre of sustainability) and inclusivity. All progress that humanity is making by way of scientific breakthroughs, industrialisation, new discoveries, innovations, space exploration, medical sciences, digitisation, artificial intelligence, et al, can come to naught if we fail to (a) arrest the march of climate change and (b) ensure that all economic gains percolate down to bottom of the pyramid and are distributed reasonably fairly between countries, states and regions within the country, rural and urban areas, even within the same village between farmers who become super rich by selling their lands for industry and others who continue to till their small parcels of land, different sections of society, people with disabilities, gender parity, etc. There has to be adequate balance in jobs both in the government and in private sector, blue collar and white collar employment, factories and offices, e-market places, infrastructure building, utilities like electricity, water, railways, transportation, R&D, cyber spaces, police, para-military and defence forces, teaching, hospitals, performing arts, even admission to institutes of higher learning like IITs,

IIMs, medical colleges, etc.

Let me start with how the rich countries are dealing with the developing ones on the crucial issue of 'climate change'. Everyone knows that rapid industrialisation by the rich—post 1950—is a major cause of the accumulation of GHGs (Green House Gases) in Earth's atmosphere which is leading to the increase in the intensity and frequency of 'extreme weather events' like flash floods, heat waves, cyclones, etc. Scores of international conferences have been held during the last twenty years and everyone has shown 'serious concern' about the problem but when it comes to picking up the tab most of them clam up. The rich—responsible for the current horrendous state—just refuse to accept that putting brakes on the deadly advance of climate change is also their responsibility and they must pay for it. When it comes to 'reducing emissions' they want all nations to agree to similar targets, completely forgetting that they have already built their infrastructure and factories and the developing nations have yet to do so. To add insult to injury, whenever 'emissions' are discussed, they flaunt 'total amount by various countries' and ignore the 'per capita' figures. The world, collectively, needs trillions of dollars to phase out fossil-based energy, to make all our factories and transport—air, sea, and land—move over to

really ‘green living’. Developing countries just don’t have the resources to do all this on their own. So, we will continue to argue matters; we have already signed the Montreal and Kyoto protocols and there will be many more, but to help us meet our Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) the rich will not budge from their rigid stand. Despite all this, India has made great strides in the direction of increasing the share of clean energy out of the total energy produced in the country and, in fact, taken the lead by jointly establishing the International Solar Alliance (ISA) with France. ISA already has 90 odd members including USA which was playing truant till Donald Trump was the president.

Within our own country, the gap between rich states like Maharashtra and the five southern states vis-à-vis Bihar, UP, Jharkhand, and MP continues to increase. It is a fact that the richer states always manage to grab big FDI projects and no one wants to look at the poor ones. Interestingly, the five southern states put together account for an eye popping 30 per cent of the total GDP of the country. In addition, they also have the lowest ‘Debt to GDP ratio’. I guess their being sheltered from invaders over centuries has also helped them but, perhaps, more than that the education level and enterprise of the people in the South and, of course, better governance has also played a significant part.

Let me now look at a few other areas of huge (corrigible) disparities and lack of inclusivity. A glaring example is higher education. We just don’t have enough seats in management, engineering, and medicine to be able to accommodate all the youngsters finishing school and wanting to pursue higher studies. Out of the 26-27 crore students in our country’s 15 lakh schools, nearly 2 crores must be finishing higher secondary or equivalent level every year and, I presume, at least 10 to 20 per cent must be aspiring to join our elite, world-class IITs and medical colleges. Now, the total number of MBBS

seats in our 600 odd colleges is about 92,000 and another 27,000 for BDS. This figure of 92,000 includes 48,000 government seats—I suppose these are in government medical colleges. Add to this the total 16,600 undergraduate course seats in all the 23 IITs put together. So, where can our 20 to 40 lakh budding aspirants go? Their only chance of getting a seat lies in joining the grueling and very expensive coaching classes to be able to clear JEE, NEET, CUET, CLAT, etc. Even that is fine because the best must get the prized seats except that many from poor families just can’t afford the fees of good coaching schools. But, there is a bigger and sinister menace called ‘capitation fees’. I recently read somewhere that, as per a National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) study, the capitation fee collected by private colleges, on management quota seats during the year 2013 was a whopping ₹ 5,953 crores. Needless to mention that most of it must be in black. I believe this system has somehow been plugged for medical colleges but the engineering ones are still raking in and the figure must have multiplied. Obviously, kids from rich families grab most of these ‘management quota’ seats leaving those with limited means to go for the plain BA degrees and clerical jobs all their life. Even primary education—a matter of constitutional right for every child—is denied to some because their poor parents just cannot send them to a school.

Similar is the condition of sports. With most of the federations—athletics, wrestling, hockey, football, tennis, badminton, et all—chaired by political appointees only those promising children with strong political patronage manage to join national schools and then move up the ladder. Many brilliant ones with potential rarely catch the eye of selectors. Thankfully things are changing in some sports. There is also significant gender bias in sports. Men have always been favoured when it comes to pay of the sports persons. ICC—dominated by India—has happily



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made a beginning for correcting this; mid-July this council announced 'equal prize money for men's and women's teams at its global events'; great beginning and hope this spreads to other sports too and not only at global events but within the country also. There is indeed huge disparity in salaries of men and women in almost all sports.

Gender bias is of course not confined to sports—it happens in virtually all spheres of life. Barring some brilliant exceptions, men hog majority of the corner office suites as well as in the places of higher learning and even the legal profession—female professors in most private law schools draw significantly lower salaries than their male counterparts. A recent news from IIT Madras has brought cheer on the gender parity front. While announcing the establishment of India's first IIT campus abroad, at Zanzibar, IIT-M has appointed a distinguished woman professor of chemical engineering, Preeti Aghalayam, as its first Director. Preeti has been a fierce advocate of gender balance and it is fitting that she has been given the responsibility at the Zanzibar institute. Of late several leading women actors have also

spoken about the 'humongous gender pay gap in the film industry'.

Another section of the underprivileged is Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). Dimensions of the problem—how many PwDs are there in the country—is under a haze. A Census in 2011 had come up with the figure of 28 million but, as we are all aware, this is grossly underestimated. I would not blame the Census officials because our society hides the fact if there is a child in their home who is not gifted with the power of vision, hearing, speech, mobility or has cerebral palsy, epilepsy, motor neuron disease or any other symptoms of not being normal.

Organisations working in the area of empowering PwDs and making them self-dependent and an asset to society soon came up with an estimate of about 100 million such cases in the country. Studies by WHO and the World Bank, around 2020, validated these estimates and reported that between 100 to 120 million Indians suffered from some sort of disability! Indeed, there are well meaning NGOs all over the country who are trying to bring them out in the open, impart skills to these less fortunate ones



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and find suitable jobs for them in the corporate world or in government departments. Some of them also have ‘early intervention centers’ so that the child’s conditions are scientifically assessed and corrective measures taken so that their disease is arrested and rehabilitation process is quicker. But the numbers are so large that we need at least 500X effort in the area. On paper there are ‘reservations’ for about 2.5 % of all jobs to go exclusively to PwDs, but ground realities are different. There is an independent ‘Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, headed by a full GoI secretary, under Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment and they are doing great work but we need much more by way of financial allocations and trained manpower to be able to touch the lives of all PwDs in the country.

A disgusting case of lack of inclusivity manifests in the treatment meted out to ‘service staff’ at some of the residential complexes. There have been cases of residents abusing and even manhandling lift operators and security staff when flat owners return drunk after late night parties. Recent case of a twitter post about a

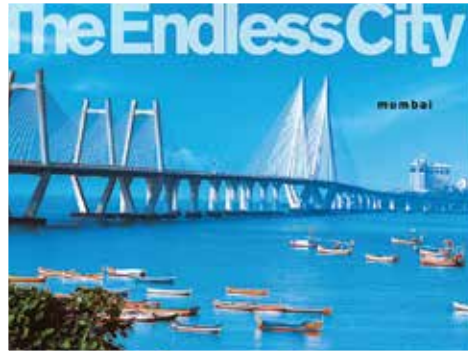
proposal made by residents of a housing society in Bengaluru - reputed as our most cosmopolitan city - to the RWA, made headlines -for all the wrong reasons. It stated that “residents can feel uncomfortable when being surrounded by maids in the common areas and also objected to cooks, carpenters and plumbers sitting on sofas in the reception area; it even went on to mention that most of us have stopped sitting on those sofas.” Separate ‘service lifts’ are of course par for the course in all condominiums which must be used by drivers, delivery persons, and domestic help. It is indeed a travesty that ‘the people we do not want loitering in our gardens are the very people we rely on to run our lives’!

In closing, I want to add that mere slogans are no longer enough. The governments—central and states—as well as society, particularly influencers, literary figures and religious leaders must come forward and actively work on closing yawning gaps between ‘haves and have nots’ of the country, indeed worldwide, before we reach a point when the oppressed ones just cannot tolerate the discrimination any longer. **IM**



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Krishan Kalra is a past president of AIMA and member, BOG IIMC. He is Trustee, Climate Project Foundation India.



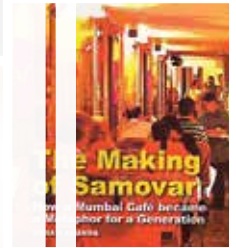
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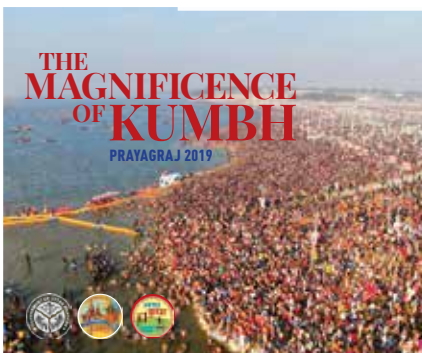
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Polina Marinova Pompliano, founder of The Profile, and author of *Hidden Genius: The Secret Ways of Thinking that Power the World's Most Successful People*, dispels a number of myths that exist around what it means to be creative, original, and successful.

**MYTH
BUSTER**

From 'great' to 'exceptional'

What distinguishes the great from the truly exceptional? After five years of writing

The Profile, I have studied hundreds of successful people and examined how they reason their way through problems, unleash their creativity, navigate relationships, and perform under extreme pressure.

In my book, *Hidden Genius*, I try to dispel a number of myths that exist around what it means to be creative, original, and successful. Here are some of them:

MYTH 1: YOU NEED TO FEEL INSPIRED IN ORDER TO BE CREATIVE.

For centuries, we have mistakenly attributed creativity to factors outside of our control. You may hear it referred to as a talent, a gift, or some sort of inexplicable genius that few people

possess.

But in reality, creativity is a skill.

And like any other skill, it can be learned.

In my years of studying people with creative minds, one name comes to mind: Grant Achatz.

Achatz is one of the most creative and cutting-edge chefs in America. As he pushed the boundaries of the culinary world, Alinea became recognized as the best restaurant in the world.

In 2008, Achatz was diagnosed with stage-four tongue cancer. Alinea's genius chef had lost his ability to taste. "There was a light bulb that went off and said, 'For the first time ever, I think I can be a chef without being able to taste.' Because it's up here," he says, pointing to his head. "It's not here," he adds, pointing to his mouth.

Could that be true? Could it be that you can think your way to creativity? Without the ability to taste, Achatz had no choice but to test it out.

He came up with a technique called 'flavour bouncing'. He takes a sheet of paper and draws a big circle around one central, thematic ingredient. He calls this the 'focal

ingredient' that will set the tone for the entire dish. Then he bounces 'satellite ingredients' (or complementary ingredients) off the focal ingredient by drawing lines to each one.

His diagnosis forced him, to figure out new ways to keep Alinea at the forefront of culinary innovation. As someone who makes a living by creating a new tasting menu every couple of months, Achatz couldn't wait for his muse to arrive.

In turn, he dismantles the notion that the greatest creators have an innate 'gift' for creativity. Creativity is less a fleeting moment of inspiration and more a muscle that can be trained through consistent exercise.

"People like to think the creative process is romantic," Achatz says. "The artist drifts to sleep at night, to be awakened by the subliminal

echoes of his or her next brilliant idea. The truth, for me at least, is that creativity is primarily the result of hard work and study."

MYTH 2: SUCCESS BREEDS SUCCESS.

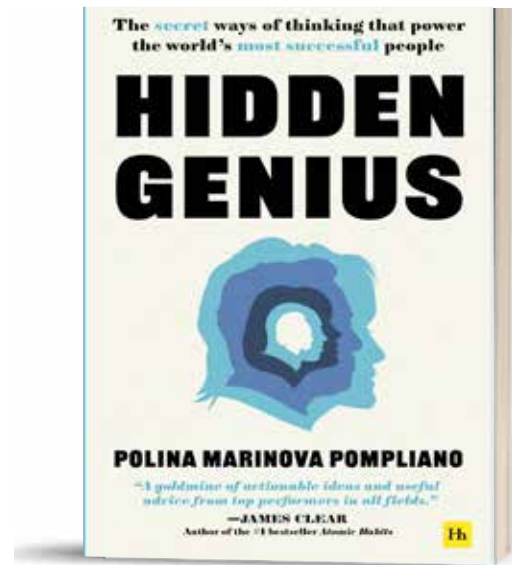
What if I told you that success doesn't always breed success? Success sometimes breeds complacency.

Let us take a look at someone who revolutionised the animation industry.

Ed Catmull, who had a doctorate in computer technology, co-founded animation film studio Pixar alongside Steve Jobs and John Lasseter, and they began taking creative risks that shook up the entertainment world.

Catmull's hidden genius lies in his ability to use both sides of his brain, the creative and the logical. In his five-decade career, Catmull helped bring to life a number of computer-animated hit films, including *Toy Story*, *Finding Nemo*, *Ratatouille*, and *Wall-E*. As a computer scientist, he also invented algorithms, made important

What you eat is who you are, and what you read is who you become. While most of us are willing to invest in our health, we often neglect our 'content diet', the information we feed our brains.



discoveries in computer graphics, and helped pioneer digitally realistic films.

Catmull credits his success to his willingness to fail. When asked how Pixar's animation units manage to pull off one hit after another, he says: "If something works, you shouldn't do it again. We want to do something that is new, original—something where there's a good chance of failure [each time]."

Original creators typically have three characteristics in common: They have a unique point of view on the world. They are confident they can achieve an ambitious goal. And finally, they are willing to fail spectacularly in the name of creating something revolutionary.

MYTH 3: CONSUMING A LARGE QUANTITY OF INFORMATION MAKES US WELL-INFORMED.

I have found a concept that is simple but overlooked: What you eat is who you are, and what you read is who you become. While most of us are willing to invest in our health, we often neglect our 'content diet', the information we feed our brains.

We may pride ourselves on consuming a lot

of information, but if that information is not high-quality, the quantity does not matter. It is easy to fall into a spiral of consuming junk food content, sensationalist articles, and social media posts that plunge you into destructive thought patterns. So can we inch toward leading healthier lives by optimising what our bodies and our brains ingest? Start with conducting an honest content consumption audit.

In 2019, I made a conscious decision to elevate the information I was consuming, and it had a tremendous effect on my mental state. First, I conducted a content audit: What do I read, watch, and listen to? Who do I hang out with? Then, I made a few rules: I would read fewer surface-level news articles and more long-form profiles, I would watch less reality TV and more documentaries, and I would limit my conversations to 10 per cent small talk and 90 per cent substance.

Finally came the practical part. I deleted a few social media apps from my phone and I stopped mindlessly scrolling. I used Pocket and Notion to save interesting articles, podcasts, and video interviews I wanted to watch, and

I joined communities and engaged with people who enjoyed brainstorming and debating new ideas. I listened to high-quality podcasts during my runs and I launched The Profile Dossier, a weekly deep-dive that allowed me to take a closer look at a person whose life path I found interesting. Finally, I started conducting interviews to have more compelling conversations. If you go about your day without a content strategy, you run the risk of falling into an echo chamber full of one-sided opinions. When it comes to your brain, you need to get off autopilot.

MYTH 4: A LEADER SITS AT THE TOP OF THE PYRAMID.

Many leaders think of themselves at the top of a pyramid and, employ a top-down approach at their organisations. But what if there was a more efficient and innovative way to manage a team?

Over the last decade, Spotify founder Daniel Ek has developed a non-conventional leadership playbook at the music-streaming behemoth. Ek, who is personally reserved



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but professionally ruthless, employs a fresh approach to creativity and leadership.

Ek once heard the CEO of Scandinavian Airlines say that the right way to think about leadership is to flip the top-down model. “You should invert the pyramid and envision yourself as the person at the bottom,” Ek says. “You are there to enable all the work being done. That’s my mental image of what I’m here to do at Spotify.”

In a bottom-up management approach, the ideas, values, and strategies come mostly from the employees who are the lifeblood of the company, while the C-suite executives offer support and resources to help the team execute plans quickly.

Ek was originally against a product team’s idea to roll out Discover Weekly, a personalised playlist that updates weekly for each user. He questioned them multiple times and asked why they were spending time and energy working on the feature. “I would have killed that if it was just me, 100 per cent,” he told Fast Company in 2018. “I never really saw the beauty of it.”

The team continued working on it despite Ek’s lack of enthusiasm. And then suddenly, they launched it to the public. “I remember reading about it in the press,” Ek said. “I thought, Oh, this is going to be a disaster.”

Discover Weekly became one of Spotify’s most loved product features.

Ek says, his role in the inverted pyramid structure is to empower internal leaders and direct the necessary resources so they can execute their ideas. “I’ll provide people a rough direction,” he explains. “I won’t provide them all of the things that they need in order to get there.”

MYTH 5: SUCCESS IS AN EXTERNAL MEASURE OF CAREER, STATUS, OR WEALTH.

I once asked myself, “How do I define success?” This question changed the trajectory of my life.



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In January 2020, I read this Anna Quindlen quote: “If your success is not on your own terms, if it looks good to the world but does not feel good in your heart, it is not success at all.” The truth was that I didn’t feel successful on my own terms. I still saw success as a measure of status, money, and achievement. I did not realise that the universal hidden genius across many of the exceptional people I had studied was this: Success is personal.

Comedian Jerry Seinfeld describes success as the endless process of tinkering until you get as close as you can to perfection: “Solitude and precision, refining a tiny thing for the sake of it.” Melinda Gates, on the other hand, says her definition of success was shaped by this Ralph Waldo Emerson quote: “To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.” In her case, as one of the richest women on the planet, she has used her capital to back global health initiatives and support female-led businesses.

After studying and interviewing so many remarkable figures, I don’t envy or hero-worship any of them. I have seen that success does not exist in a vacuum; people are dealing with drama and all sorts of human messiness on a daily basis. So, how do you define success? **IM**



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SOLUTION

PROBLEM

?

Take a moment

Reactive thinking is one of the many dysfunctional symptoms of our often chronically imbalanced corporate cultures in which doing eclipses being, the left brain dominates the right brain, and sensing, feeling, intuiting, and the transpersonal are relegated to the outer fringes of life.

For all the extraordinary technological progress we have made, the tragedy and great danger of modernity is that this has been completely normalised. In so doing, we have all but lost our deep kinship with the earth, with the trees, the birds, the oceans. We live in a kind of desperate existential exile, in our tiny, isolated bubbles of separateness, largely disconnected from our bodies, our hearts, and all too often from our souls.

I notice more and more in my consulting work that we are in an epidemic of loneliness. Despite the mirage of the widely used word 'connected', the sad truth is that we have quite possibly never been more disconnected. This alone accounts for the huge mental health crisis we face, as well as the greatly increased rate of suicides and suicidal ideation in young people.

In today's fast-paced and ever-changing business landscape, the pressure to stay ahead and adapt quickly is immense. But the increasing prevalence of reactive thinking is posing a significant threat both to life and to businesses worldwide. Reactive thinking refers to the tendency to respond immediately to challenges and opportunities without taking a moment to pause, reflect, and strategise. This impulsive approach usually leads to decision-making based on short-term gains rather than long-term sustainability. It comes from a place of fear and rarely generates anything positive. It is quite different from a highly attuned speedy response, arising from a place of great centeredness.

These are some of the specific problems caused by reactive thinking:

- **Lack of strategic planning.** Reactive thinking often prevents business leaders from engaging in strategic planning. Instead of defining clear goals, identifying potential risks, and devising long-term strategies, they find themselves constantly chasing after immediate solutions, and putting out the next fire.
- **Poor resource allocation.** When businesses operate in a reactive mode, resources are frequently allocated on an

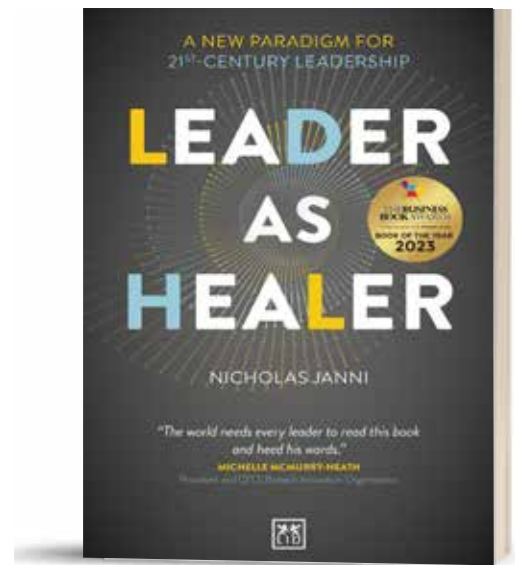
ad hoc basis, rather than being strategically distributed. This can lead to inefficient use of resources, as decisions are made hastily without considering the broader implications. In the long run, this can exhaust valuable resources, preventing investments in critical areas such as research and development or employee development.

- **Inconsistent decision-making.** Reactive thinking often results in inconsistent decision-making. When decisions are made impulsively, without careful consideration and analysis, it becomes challenging to maintain a coherent and consistent strategy. This inconsistency can confuse employees, clients, and stakeholders, eroding trust and undermining the organisation's credibility.
- **Missed opportunities.** A reactive mindset can blind businesses to potential opportunities. By constantly focusing on immediate challenges and firefighting, organizations overlook opportunities for innovation, market expansion, and strategic partnerships. Proactive thinking, on the other hand, allows businesses to anticipate trends, identify gaps in the market, and seize opportunities to stay ahead of the competition.

Leaders unable to break free of reactive thinking impulses will also almost certainly be unable to create healthy relationships, because they have little availability to listen to people. They have only their own incessant mental chatter on their 'screen' of awareness. They may well also lose sight of any kind of the meaningful larger purpose that has become increasingly important in corporate life.

Out of interest, I asked AI for recommendations about breaking free from reactive thinking. Here is a summary of the answers:

1. Cultivate a reflective culture
2. Embrace a growth mindset



3. Prioritise strategic planning
4. Develop effective communication channels
5. Invest in continuous learning

These are perfectly reasonable answers, yet, not surprisingly, do not go nearly deep enough. They do not address the basic state of internal fragmentation that reactive thinking arises from. When body, heart, mind and soul are not in any kind of real alignment, then our minds very easily take over, and anyway, this is what our culture supports from the early stages of education.

Furthermore, reactive thinking often arises from an emotional territory of anxiety. There are few people who do not carry anxiety within them in these increasingly unstable times, be that related to personal circumstances, or the various societal and global catastrophe scenarios unfolding. Because we are so frightened of our emotions, we usually do not do the one thing that is needed, the one thing that will calm our whole nervous system—to create safe enough relational space to simply feel the fear without in any way trying to make it change or go away.

This is part of what I consider to be the two essential pillars of development that I believe all



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leaders should be required to commit to.

The first is the practice of meditation, mindfulness and the body practices such as yoga, qigong or a martial art, in order to break the obsession with thinking, and restore it to its correct function as a servant rather than a master, as Einstein asked of us. This is far more than the use of meditation/mindfulness to manage stress, useful as that may be. We are speaking here of a fundamental inner ‘relocation’. Instead of showing up as ‘I am primarily thinker’, I gradually learn to show up as a deeper Presence, within which there is deep embodiment, an open heart, an attuned intuition function, and a highly sophisticated mind.

Another way of saying this is that there is a deep integration of ‘being’ and ‘doing’, not as an either/or but rather as an interdependent unity—this is the basis of all peak performance, whether in the arts, in sport or in leadership.

The other is firstly to rewrite our whole approach to emotion, and to abolish the idea

of ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ emotion, and then to recognise the extent to which the dysfunctional parts of our adult personalities are formed by our unintegrated childhood experiences of hurt and wounding, as well as intergenerational trauma patterns, and to find mentors who are able to work with the healing of these; healing that takes place not by changing or fixing them, but rather by creating a relational space of sufficient warmth and unconditionality such that we can finally feel that which we have spent so much energy to not feel.

Then we will have leaders who are rooted in the river of life, and who create cultures that support the collective flow and natural intelligence of life, and who understand that, far from trying to control it, the urgency now is to learn how to be servants of it.

These are what I call ‘Leader as Healer’

And the toxicity of reactive thinking will be something we remember as a bizarre aberration, with a wry smile. **IM**



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nicholas Janni is co-founder, Matrix Leadership Development. Nicholas is also author, *Leader as Healer: A New Paradigm for 21st-century Leadership*.



Being practical, fair, caring, and empathic are just a few of the values that a leader should uphold when interacting with team members.

**ORGANISATIONAL
CULTURE**

♦ DR SUMANTA DUTTA, ST. XAVIER'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), KOLKATA

A groundwork for new learnings

In challenging times, organisations considered happiness at work as 'the holy grail' of organisational success. But it was not a new concept even back then; the famous Greek philosopher Aristotle stated that happiness is every human's goal, and it was a matter of living a good, virtuous life.

The belief that happy workers are more productive leads to a win-win situation for both individuals and organisations. They demonstrate that workplace happiness is vital for employees, and organisations consider it composed of work engagement, career satisfaction, and subjective well-being.

The nature of work and work design is ever-changing. Early management theories considered workers as cogs in the wheels of production. Traditionally, the top-down approach meant that organisations had to put effort into nurturing the workplace environment, thus boosting desirable

outcomes. Modern theories view the worker as an organisation's critical component, i.e., an asset rather than a liability. They hold the more open view that workers have a proactive role in influencing their environments. One such self-driven proactive behaviour is job crafting. It allows an employee to shape and modify a job's task, relational, and cognitive boundaries.

In recent times, the COVID-19 pandemic has favourably resulted in organisations taking notice of employee well-being. Managers try to understand employee work attitudes and behaviours to retain talent and improve performance. How happiness impacts employees and organisations can be identified as follows: First, there are personal impacts that are directly tied to each individual's life, such as income, a higher life expectancy and health, increased career self-awareness, no burnout, and a feeling of solidarity. The second is workplace behaviours (i.e., how people

Organisational leadership variables such as management cooperation, structure and work system, decision-making authority, leadership credibility, and employer recognition can also influence how stressful it is to work as an employee.

behave at work), such as better teamwork, reduced turnover, increased task, and contextual performance. Finally, group of impacts e.g., organisational outcomes.

As a leader in an organisation, there are some principles that a leader should practice when dealing with employees, such as being realistic, fair, considerate, and empathic. According to Chiumento (2006), organisational leadership factors such as cooperation

in management, structure and work system, decision-making power, leadership credibility, and employer recognition can also

contribute to a stressful employee.

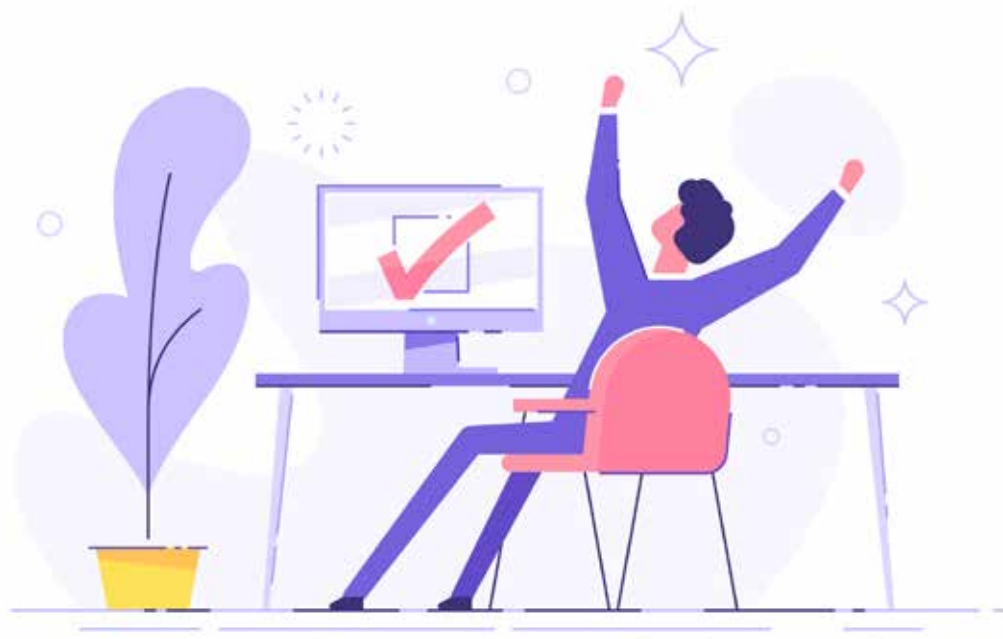
Being practical, fair, caring, and empathic are just a few of the values that a leader in an organisation should uphold when interacting with his/her team members. Organisational leadership variables such as management cooperation, structure and work system, decision-making authority, leadership credibility, and employer recognition can also influence how stressful it is to work as an employee.

Being open and vulnerable can help leaders and their teams remove their masks and reveal their true selves. It also encourages everyone to become more self-aware of their strengths and areas they could adjust, which in turn can lay the groundwork for new learnings by setting goals—but not just any goals. ■



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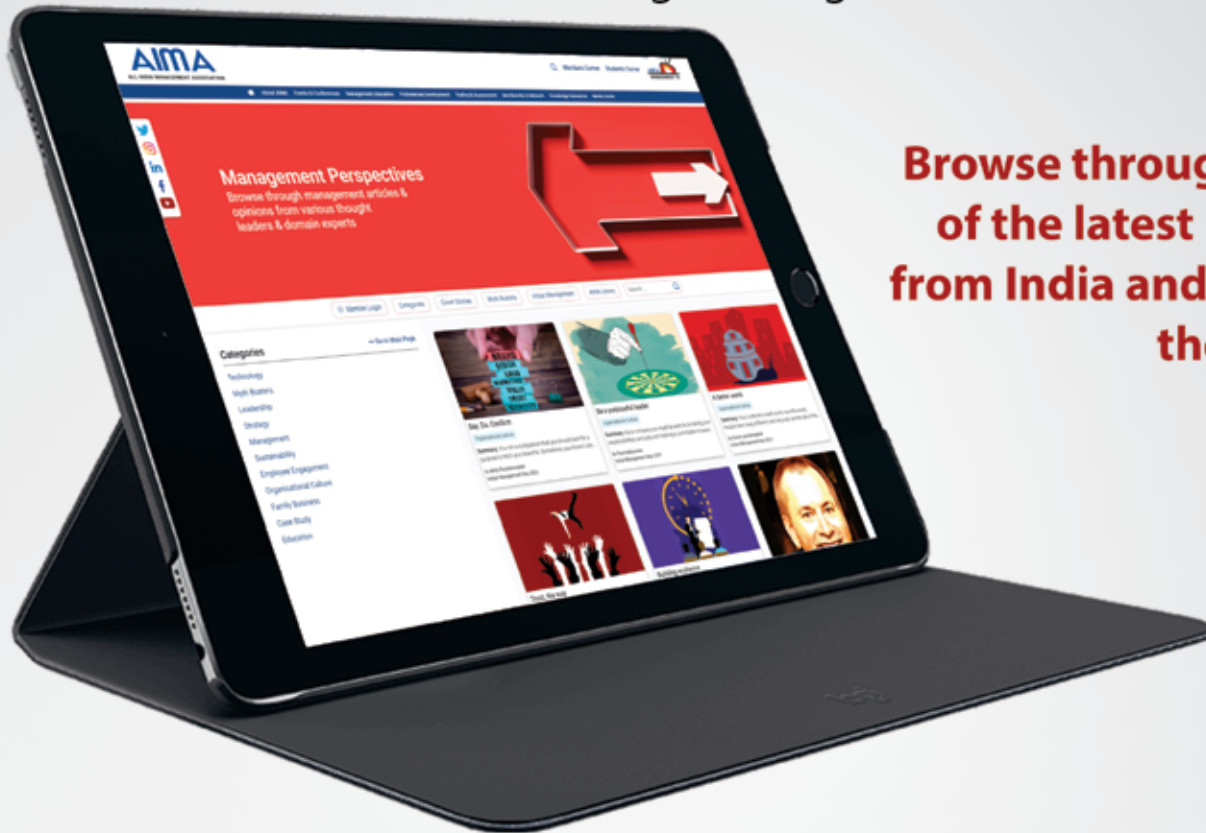
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